

New Years Eve Rev.21,1-6

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The old year is almost past-and we want to say farewell to it in this very particular and very special worship with Europeans from all over the continent gathered here in the name of Christ.

So how was the year it for you? Do you remember your New Year resolution—and what happened to-or with it? Be it losing weight, be it passing examinations in university or reaching a goal at work? Looking back-are you ok-or even satisfied with yourself? What do you think? An honest look back isn't easy is it? I need to admit, that I do not even remember my last New Year resolution. Yet-since 2017 is winding down and since we sit here as Europeans-it is a good opportunity to have an honest look back together-a look back regarding our personal lives and the life of our continent in God's name. And as we look back-what do we see? We see that our beloved Europe- the freest continent on Earth-is not in the best shape. It seems that crises are lurking everywhere we look. Be it Spain, be it Italy, be it the UK, Poland, Ukraine-and-unexpectedly-even Germany. Economic crises, political crises, ethnic crises, immigration crises. Many of our fellow Europeans, young, motivated and well trained are looking for jobs in their countries and don't get one. What will happen to them?

One country-more or less mother of the Bill of Rights, that every democracy of our continent and beyond is based on, is about to be heading for the exit door. What will this mean for them? To us? To the world? More than one country is officially doubting what we are all based on: Human Rights-and independency of the three branches of government. Some folks even cry they want the borders back! There is too much of the new-and simultaneously old battle cry Germany first-or France first-or Poland first-Britain first-whatever country first going on again-while the poorest of the poor are trying to swim to our enormously rich shores. Many are drowning-and those who don't are being treated like outcasts. They want back what our fathers fought for to remove so hard. There are Nations that-more than two decades after eventually having gained independence-are fearing for it yet once again-and there is even a war going on not too far away.

Europe-as it sometimes seems to me-is about to become a dangerous place again since, what seemed to be self-evident for such a long time, is not so self-evident any more.

And again and again I am coming to the point to think that too many people forgot-or simply ignored that our grandfathers-and great-grandfathers did not have the opportunity to join Pan-European Gathering of young Christians-but were in the trenches, fighting bloody wars against each other –and many-too many did not make it back home. My father’s family for example was nearly erased during WWII. There is the diabolic ghost of mistrust and collective egocentrism going around in our continent again. All this sounds very political-and yes it does. How come? When we talk about God-we talk about God and God’s people that subsume themselves in the *polis*, which is nothing else than the Greek word for community.

And the German Theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer who was deeply involved in the resistance against Hitler once said a Christian must be political- meaning a Christian must have a stake in the life of the polis, the community he or she lives in. Europe, one big, diverse, multicultural, beautiful, horrific, fascinating community with people from all-and I really mean—all walks of life.

Hence-what is going on in the polis, what is going on in this big European community-I would even like to call it family-has an impact on our personal lives. In the German speaking countries, every year is dedicated biblical slogan by the Brothers of Herrnhuth, a protestant community of people that is striving for radical pacifism -that can be used as a leitmotif. The slogan for 2018 is-as what we just heard- taken from Revelation 21, 6 and reads: “To the thirsty, I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life.”We all know is that it is water what keeps us alive and afloat. Last but not least because of that, it is water-this fluid of life what is being used in baptism. Many on our beloved continent are thirsty-thirsty for life in peace and justice in their legal systems, thirsty for a reasonable economic prosperity to just make ends meet. Many are thirsty for love-and trust. As the polis-as community of Taizé, we have embarked on our way called the pilgrimage of trust on earth. We are not looking at quantitative easing and interest rates-we are not playing the blame game pointing fingers at countries that are not that well off as we are-we don’t put ourselves-and our countries first. We are on our pilgrimage-on our way to build trust among each other. I invite us all to not forget that. Trust is like water-since we cannot live without trust-having no trust means living in fear. Right now we are here in Dornach sharing a great time. But tomorrow-in the New Year, we are all heading back home to take care of our daily business again. And one day, many of you will be in a position of responsibility and leadership for your polis-for your community yourself. Many people that are thirsty will be looking up to you. Looking for water.

Then- remember what John said: To the thirsty I will give the water of life at no cost. And think of the pilgrimage of trust that we all have decided to walk on. The Taize community is a source, a role model for peace and trust. So are you-so are we. I have a New Year resolution for us. Let us try to live-and to spread trust to our polis-to or communities without ignoring let alone sugarcoating differences we have among ourselves. Let us water the feeling of trust between the folks we know-and don't know to bring it back to live so that it blossoms in our homes and beyond again. Let us do this for the Lord in who's name we have gathered here as citizens of so many nations yet one people under God's loving wings. Jubilate coeli!